

## Take Heart!

Joe Slater

After being battered and tossed two solid weeks in a fierce storm at sea, “*all hope that we should be saved was finally given up*” (Acts 27:20). Who can blame them? They had done everything humanly possible to keep the ship from disintegrating; but nothing seemed to help. Imagine the seasickness, discouragement, and exhaustion!

Then Paul spoke up: “*I urge you to take heart*” (27:22). What?! Are you some kind of Pollyanna?

No, Paul wasn’t an irrepressible optimist! He had good reason for what he said. God had sent an angel to assure him that all 276 people aboard the ship would survive. Paul set forth three crucial reasons for his confidence:

1. I belong to this God (27:23a).
2. I serve this God (27:23b).
3. I believe this God (27:25).

Christians can face the best and worst of times when we keep these critical points in mind. We belong to God. He values us and watches over us in all circumstances.

We serve God. He is worthy of our service whether our conditions are pleasant or dreadful.

We believe God. Our confidence in Him must not wane when severe trials come upon us.

Our God has communicated with us. No, He hasn’t sent an angel to you or me as He did to Paul. But He has and still does speak by means of His inspired word. He has assured us that “*all things work together for God to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose*” (Romans 8:28).

Take heart!

## Living on the B Side

“. . . make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: you should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you. . .” (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

In my younger years, I enjoyed playing 45 singles. For those unaware or too young to remember, a 45 is a small vinyl record containing one song on each side. The record played at a speed of forty-five revolutions per minute (45 RPM). The song receiving the most airplay (the hit) was known as the A side, while the song on the reverse (the B side) tended to be a lesser-known song. On rare occasions, B side eclipsed the A side and became the hit song.

Many live what could be considered a “B side existence,” and in all honesty, choose to live in this fashion. These individuals hold regular employment, attend church regularly, save money, borrow money, pay their bills, go on vacations, raise families, and in the words of Paul, seek to live “*in all good conscience*” (Acts 23:1) with the world around them. The vast majority of this group do not seek fame or glory or power or wealth. They are happy and content to live in such a fashion.

In Mark 10, Jesus met a rich young ruler who asked what he must do “*to inherit eternal life*” (17). The young man displayed validity in his outward life, but an inward love of wealth became his eternal downfall (vv. 21-22). For this man, leaving his wealth to embrace “B side living” proved to be too much. A great deal can be said for living modestly and not letting pursuit of wealth be one’s sole motivating factor, for wealth is often used to manipulate and control others rather than blessing them.

Sadly, wealth or wealth’s temptations will lead to many an eternal downfall (1 Tim. 6:10).

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

## Righteousness

“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Those who say, “I didn’t do anything wrong,” “I never hurt anyone,” or, “I never even bothered anyone,” fall short of “doing right” and “helping.”

Righteousness is not just the absence of sin – it’s the presence of right-doing. The absence of wrong-doing leaves a void that is to be filled with righteous deeds. Faith without works is dead!

Jesus will say to those on His left: “Depart from Me . . . for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me . . . to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me” Matthew 25:43-45).

--Ron Adams (via Bulletin Gold)

## What’s in a Name?

Salvation is in a name, and in one name only: “*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

Shakespeare had a point too, though: “That which we call a rose by any other name would still smell as sweet.” Likewise, if it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it’s a duck, even if someone calls it a chicken!

As Karl Menninger pointed out in his excellent book, Whatever Happened to Sin?, if something is contrary to a commandment of God, it is a sin, even if it is called a “mistake” or some other euphemism. Calling it something else doesn’t change what it is.

--Cecil May, Jr. (via Preacher Talk)